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Inquiry Is Sought About Deletions in Report on Justice Department

By ERIC LICHTBLAU

WASHINGTON, Nov. 3 — Two leading House Democrats asked the Justice Department's inspector general on Monday to investigate the department's decision to delete large parts of a report on employee diversity before releasing it publicly.

The Democrats, John Conyers Jr. of Michigan and Jerrold Nadler of New York, suggested in a letter to the inspector general that the department had skirted the Freedom of Information Act "simply to cover up its own poor record" in the hiring and treatment of minority employees.

An outside contractor completed its assessment of the department's internal diversity 16 months ago, but about half of its 186 pages were blacked out in the version that the department posted on its Web site last month. Many deleted passages included negative findings about continuing problems in the department's hiring, retention and treatment of minority employees.

Department officials said that career employees involved in Freedom of Information Act issues decided to edit out sections of the report that were "deliberative and predecisional" or simply inaccurate. Officials also pointed to recent strides by the department in its hiring and retention of minority lawyers.

But Mr. Conyers and Mr. Nadler wrote that they found it "outrageous that the very agency that is charged with rooting out discrimination would make it so difficult for the public to scrutinize its own civil rights record."

They asked the inspector general to determine whether the department's handling of the report was necessary or appropriate and whether political appointees played a role.

Department officials did not respond to calls on Monday seeking comment. Glenn Fine, the inspector general, said he had not yet seen the letter but would review it to determine if an inquiry was warranted.

Separately, Mr. Fine released a report showing that the F.B.I. has increased its terrorism investigation resources substantially since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Mr. Fine's office found that in the years before the attacks, the F.B.I. devoted "significantly more" resources to traditional law enforcement than to terrorism, even though national security was regarded as its top priority. But last fiscal year, the number of agents working on terrorism doubled to nearly 4,700. "To its credit, the bureau responded to the 9/11 tragedy with an unprecedented level of effort," the report said.